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Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 VO-05 INSE-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00
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----------093938 240958Z /11
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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
SECSTATE WASHDC 8713

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 05658

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS : SREF
SUBJECT : BRITISH VESSEL AVON FOREST

REF: TAIPEI 5522, HONG KONG 11404 (NOTAL)

1. HONG KONG 11404 ALONG WITH OTHER MATTERS REQUESTED THAT EMBASSY TAIPEI REPRESENTING BRITISH INTERESTS IN TAIWAN MAKE FURTHER APPROACH TO GROC WITH REGARD TO DETAILS OF TIMING OF DEPARTURE OF BOAT REFUGEES RECENTLY LANDED FROM "AVON FOREST".

2. EMBASSY TAIPEI BELIEVES THE APPROACH SUGGESTED IN HONG KONG 11404 COULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AS IT SOMEHOW GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF A SHIFTING OF POSITION FOLLOWING AN AGREEMENT. SUGGEST THAT IF THE UKG AND THE HKG WISH TO MAINTAIN THE POSSIBILITY OF A RELATIVELY RECEPTIVE CLIMATE IN THE FUTURE WITHIN THE GROC WITH REGARD TO BOAT REFUGEES ABOARD BRITISH VESSELS, WOULD BE BETTER TO SIMPLY STICK WITH THE ORIGINAL UKG'S GUARANTEE (WHICH WAS QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD). THE CONCISE AND BINDING TERMS OF THAT OFFER PROBABLY GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS EXPLAINING ITS QUICK
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ACCEPTANCE.

3. THE TIMETABLE OF THREE MONTHS WAS ACCEPTED BY THE GROC ALTHOUGH VERBALLY THE GROC REP INDICATED THAT A ONE MONTH TIMETABLE WOULD BE BETTER. THE GROC PROBABLY DOES NOT WISH TO DICKER ABOUT RELATIVELY MINOR TIMING DETAILS. GROC CERTAINLY INTENDS TO KEEP THESE BOAT

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REFUGEES UNTIL THEY CAN BE MOVED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE PRESENT AGREEMENT BUT PROBABLY EXPECTS AS EXPEDITIOUS ACTION AS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE THREE MONTH LIMIT ON ALL FORTY REFUGEES WHERE EVER THEY MAY RESETTLE.
4. WITH REGARD TO THOSE BOAT REFUGEES FROM THE "AVON FOREST" WHO MAY QUALIFY UNDER THE U.S. PROGRAM, THE GROC MOST LIKELY WOULD BE CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH THE BROADER ISSUE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESETTLEMENT OF THE OTHER BOAT REFUGEES NOW IN TAIWAN. INCLUDING THOSE FROM THE "AVON FOREST," THE ACCUMULATION OF BOAT REFUGEES HERE IS CREATING A CRITICAL SPACE PROBLEM AT THE AREA USED FOR TEMPORARY REFUGEE RECEPTION AND HOUSING BY THE GROC. THE U.S. HAS BEEN UNTIL NOW THE ONLY COUNTRY WITH A FUNCTIONAL BOAT REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM IN TAIWAN. YET THE USG WAS LAST ABLE TO MOVE BOAT REFUGEES FROM TAIWAN TO THE U.S. IN FEBRUARY 1978. THE NUMBER WAS SIGNIFICANT AT THE TIME AND TOTALED 53. SINCE FEBRUARY OF 1978 12 GROUPS OF BOAT REFUGEES HAVE ARRIVED IN TAIWAN AND IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT DURING THIS PERIOD AT LEAST SOME OF THESE BOAT REFUGEES COULD HAVE BEEN MOVED TO THE U.S. BUT THIS COULD NOT BE ARRANGED
FOR REASONS BEYOND THE EMBASSY'S CONTROL. TO COMPLICATE THE MATTER, THE BOAT REFUGEE POPULATION HERE JUST DOUBLED ON AUGUST 14 WITH THE ARRIVAL OF ONE GROUP OF ABOUT 444 REPEAT 444 INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEES. THE TOTAL BOAT REFUGEES NOW IS ABOUT 818, INCLUDING THOSE FROM THE "AVON
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FOREST". THE GROC IS CONCERNED, AND NATURALLY THE REFUGEES THEMSELVES ARE EVEN MORE CONCERNED. IT IS HOPED THAT THE VISIT HERE BY AN U. S. INS OFFICER FROM HONG KONG TO INTERVIEW BOAT REFUGEES IN SEPTEMBER WILL RESULT IN A DENT BEING MADE IN THIS 818 TOTAL AND WILL RESULT ALSO IN THE ONWARD MOVEMENT TO THE U. S. IN SEPTEMBER (AND CERTAINLY WITHIN THREE MONTHS OF AUGUST 18) OF THOSE REFUGEES FROM THE "AVON FOREST" WHO CAN QUALIFY UNDER THE U. S. PROGRAM. THE EMBASSY IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO HELP OUT IN THIS HUMANITARIAN EFFORT BUT CAN CERTAINLY USE THE HELP WHICH ARRIVES IN SEPTEMBER.

5. CANADIAN OFFER OF RESETTLEMENT IS PARTICULARLY WELCOME AS IT SHOULD SERVE TO REDUCE THIS BOAT REFUGEE POPULATION. SHOULD WE APPRISE THE GROC AND THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM THE "AVON FOREST" OF CANADA'S OFFER OF RESETTLEMENT? WOULD CANADA'S OFFER BE OPEN TO ALL OR JUST THOSE THAT QUALIFY UNDER CANADIAN LAW? PLEASE ADVISE. HONG KONG 11404 STATED THE REFUGEES WHO ASSENT COULD BE MOVED TO HONG KONG FOR ONWARD PROCESSING WHICH IS A GOOD IDEA.

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6. HONG KONG 11404 ALSO ASKED ABOUT LOCAL PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING REFUGEES. THEY NEED MORE HELP. ONCE REFUGEES ARE LANDED IN TAIWAN, THE JVR NORMALLY CONTACTS ALL OF THEM. THE JVR, HOWEVER, IS HANDICAPPED BY THE FACT THAT THEY ONLY HAVE ONE PERSON AVAILABLE TO DO THIS WORK. AS A RESULT, THE TIME FRAME BETWEEN BEING LANDED AND BEING CONTACTED CAN BE RATHER PROLONGED.
7. THE FOLLOWING IS GROC REPORT OF "BOAT CASE" REFUGEES ARRIVALS:

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7. THE FOLLOWING IS GROC REPORT OF "BOAT CASE" REFUGEES ARRIVALS:

"BOAT CASE" REFUGEES FROM INDO-CHINA RESCUED
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

DATE OF ARRIVALS	NUMBER OF REFUGEES	ACCUMULATIVE TOTAL	PLACE OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IN TAIWAN
MARCH 1977	61	61	
AUG 1977	3	64	
DEC 1977	20	84	HSIN TIEN (NOW IN PENGHU)
MAR 16,1977	47	131	PENGHU (THE PESCADORES)
APR 24,1978	17	148	"

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MAY 5, 1978 32 180 "

MAY 31,1978 8 188 "
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JUNE 9, 1978 21 209 "

JUNE 10,1978 12 221 "

JUNE 15,1978 2 223 "

JUNE 15,1978 19 242 "

JUNE 27, 1978 113 355 "

JULY 2,1978 33 388 "

JULY 4,1978 10 398 "

AUG 14,1978 444 842 "

NOTE: MARCH 1977 TOTAL INCLUDES 57 REFUGEES ORIGINALLY
RESCUED AND FOUR CHILDREN BORN IN TAIWAN.
40 REFUGEES FROM AVON FOREST NOT MENTIONED IN STATISTICS.

8. TEXT OF THE LETTER FROM GROC CONFIRMING ACCEPTANCE
OF MAXIMUM TERMS:

IN REPLY TO YOUR LETTERS OF AUGUST 15 AND 18, 1978
REQUESTING PERMISSION , ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
GOVERNMENT AND HONG KONG AUTHORITIES, TO LAND THE 40
VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ABOARD THE BRITISH VESSEL "AVON
FOREST," I HAVE THE PLEASURE TO INFORM YOU THAT WITH DUE
CONSIDERATION TO THE INTERCESSION OF YOUR EMBASSY AND IN
VIEW OF THE GUARANTEE GIVEN IN YOUR LETTER OF AUGUST 18,
1978, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PREPARED TO ALLOW
THE 40 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES TO REMAIN IN THE REPUBLIC OF
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CHINA UNDER THE CUSTODY OF THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED FOR
A PERIOD OF NOT MORE THAN THREE MONTHS WITH THE FOLLOWING
UNDERSTANDING:

1. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ABOARD
THE BRITISH VESSEL "AVON FOREST" DO NOT MEET THE REQUIRE-

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MENTS LAID DOWN BY OUR GOVERNMENT REGARDING "BOAT CASE" VIETNAMESE REFUGEES, THE DECISION TO ALLOW THESE REFUGEES TO REMAIN TEMPORARILY IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA WAS TAKEN IN CONSIDERATION OF THE EXIGENCY OF THE CASE. AS AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE, IT SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A CHANGE OF POLICY ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA NOR AS A PRECEDENT.

2. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SHOULD AGREE IN ADVANCE TO EVACUATE ALL 40 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM TAIWAN WITHIN THREE MONTHS.

3. THE DECISION OF OUR GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW THESE 40 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM THE "AVON FOREST" TO REMAIN IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA FOR A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS

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IS BASED SOLELY ON THE MERIT OF THE CASE ITSELF, IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PRACTICE OR POLICY OF THE HONG KONG AUTHORITIES REGARDING THE LANDING OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES.

IN THIS CONNECTION, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE CASE OF THE "AVON FOREST" CANNOT BE COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE TWO CHINESE TRAWLERS MENTIONED IN YOUR LETTERS. THE LATTER BROUGHT THE REFUGEES OVER TO HONG KONG UNDER THE COERCION OF THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES. THEY WERE IN FACT DISTRESSED MARINERS AND VICTIMS OF FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW BY THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES.

AT THE SAME TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPOR-

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TUNITY TO REITERATE THAT WE WOULD APPRECIATE IT VERY MUCH IF YOU WOULD TAKE PROMPT STEPS TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESSING AND RESETTLEMENT OF THOSE REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN TEMPORARY SHELTER IN PENGHU, WHERE ACCOMMODATIONS AND OTHER FACILITIES ARE BECOMING A SERIOUS PROBLEM DUE TO THE RECENT CONTINUED ARRIVAL OF LARGE GROUPS OF "BOAT CASE" REFUGEES.

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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: SREF, TW
To: HONG KONG
Type: TE
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